

STATE WETLANDS MAPPING: CALIFORNIA LEGACY PROJECT

Agenda Item 11.

June 27, 2002

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Project Summary

June 27, 2002

STATE WETLANDS MAPPING: CALIFORNIA LEGACY PROJECT

File No. 00-118

Project Manager: Marc Beyeler

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorize expenditure of up to \$225,000 in Conservancy funds and up to \$510,000 in funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game to develop an updated Geographic Information Systems (GIS) wetlands inventory to implement provisions of Assembly Bill 2286 and the California Legacy Project.

LOCATION: Statewide.

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement

ESTIMATED COST:	California Resources Agency	\$430,000
	California Department of Fish and Game	80,000
	Coastal Conservancy	<u>225,000</u>
	Total Project Cost	\$735,000

The sources of project funding are funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game and funds appropriated to the Coastal Conservancy from the Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF).

PROJECT SUMMARY: Staff is recommending that the Conservancy authorize the expenditure of funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game through two Interagency Agreements and Conservancy funds to develop an updated comprehensive statewide wetlands inventory using remotely sensed imagery and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), to implement provisions of Assembly Bill 2286 and meet an critical resource inventory need for the California Legacy Project.

Assembly Bill 2286 (signed into law in late 2000 by Governor Davis) amends/adds sections to the Public Resources Code, relating to wetlands. Assembly Bill 2286 requires the State Re-

sources Agency to update all of the state's existing wetlands inventory resources in order to prepare a restoration, management, and acquisition study.

The California Legacy Project is an initiative of the California Resources Agency intended to provide state agencies and cooperating conservation partners with better information and tools to support conservation investment decisions in California. The Executive Officer of the Coastal Conservancy sits on the Project's Executive Management Advisory Committee with six other Resources Agency departments and conservancies, and Conservancy senior program staff serve on the Management Advisory Committee. One of the initial priorities for developing better information identified by the Legacy Project is the creation of a statewide wetlands GIS data layer and maps.

In 2001, the Resources Agency and the Coastal Conservancy entered into an Interagency Agreement (IAA) to initiate development of state wetlands inventory and GIS data layer. This June, the California Department of Fish and Game and the Coastal Conservancy also entered into an IAA to support this project.

The Resources Agency and the Coastal Conservancy have held two technical workshops in the past several months to identify priority elements for a scope of work for this project, identify funding needs and a schedule for project completion. Working with the staff of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and the California Department of Fish and Game, Resources Agency staff and Conservancy staff are now finalizing a project scope of work. Combining the funding from the three sources, including the Coastal Conservancy funds, will ensure that an updated digital wetlands data layer is created with full coverage of coastal wetlands based on very recent imagery (late 1990s or better).

Staff is requesting Conservancy authorization to expend funds to implement this project. Staff anticipates that the USFWS's NWI staff will assist staffs of the Resources Agency, Department of Fish and Game, and the Conservancy in implementing this project.

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

June 27, 2002

**STATE WETLAND MAPPING-
CALIFORNIA LEGACY PROJECT**

File No. 00-118

Project Manager: Marc Beyeler

STAFF

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following Resolution pursuant to Sections 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed seven hundred thirty-five thousand dollars (\$735,000) of Conservancy funds and funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game to develop an updated inventory and a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for state wetlands mapping to implement the provisions of Assembly Bill 2286 (wetlands) and the California Legacy Project and further authorizes its Executive Officer to enter into any agreements necessary to complete this project.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the guidelines and criteria set forth under Chapter 6 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270) regarding the enhancement of coastal resources.
 2. The proposed project is consistent with the guidelines and criteria set forth in the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted on January 24, 2001.”
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STAFF DISCUSSION:

Project Description: Conservancy staff is recommending authorization to expend Conservancy funds and funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game to develop a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for state wetlands mapping to implement provisions of Assembly Bill 2286 (Wetlands) and the California Resources Agency's California Legacy Project.

The California Legacy Project is an initiative of the Resources Agency intended to provide state agencies and cooperating conservation partners with better information and tools to support conservation investment decisions in California. The Executive Officer of the Coastal Conservancy sits on the Project's Executive Management Advisory Committee with six other Resources Agency departments and conservancies, and Conservancy senior program staff serve on the Management Advisory Committee. One of the initial priorities for developing better information identified by the Legacy Project is the creation of a statewide wetlands map GIS data layer.

In 2001, the Resources Agency and the Coastal Conservancy entered into an Interagency Agreement (IAA) to initiate development of state wetlands inventory and GIS data layer. This June, the California Department of Fish and Game and the Coastal Conservancy also entered into an IAA to support this project.

The Resources Agency and the Coastal Conservancy have held two technical workshops in the past several months to refine a scope of work for this project. Working with the staff of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and the California Department of Fish and Game, Resources Agency staff and Conservancy staff are now finalizing a project scope of work.

Staff is requesting Conservancy authorization to expend funds to implement this project. Staff anticipates that the USFWS's NWI staff will assist staffs of the Resources Agency, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Conservancy in implementing this project.

Project Financing:	California Resources Agency	\$430,000
	California Department of Fish and Game	80,000
	Coastal Conservancy	<u>225,000</u>
	Total Project Cost	\$735,000

The sources of project funding are funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game and funds appropriated to the Coastal Conservancy from the Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF). The Interagency Agreement between the Conservancy and the California Resources Agency provided \$465,000 in funds for this project of which \$35,000 was used to organize the initial agency and stakeholder meetings.

For the current fiscal year, the California Department of Fish and Game has committed \$80,000 to fund this project, and has committed an additional \$220,000 in its budgets for FYs 02/03 and 03/04. After the FY 02/03 budget is approved, Conservancy staff will bring an authorization request for the Conservancy's consideration to encumber the additional Fish and Game funds for this project for FY 02/03.

Conservancy staff and the California Resources Agency staff are coordinating the submittal of requests for grant funds from several grant programs to support the remaining costs of project work.

Project History: The California Legacy Project (originally known as the CCRISP Program) is an initiative of the California Resources Agency, now in its second year of a proposed six-year program schedule. The Legacy Project seeks to provide the state and its conservation partners with better information and tools to support conservation investment decisions. The Legacy Project goals include: developing a strategic context for statewide conservation investments; building on local and regional conservation planning efforts; improving conservation decision-making; coordinating conservation actions among partners; and increasing support (technical, financial, and institutional) for expanded conservation efforts in California.

The Legacy Project considers a broad range of resources, including terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and watersheds. As part of its work program, the Legacy Project has focused on the need for updated and improved information and data about the state's wetland resources, including importantly, its coastal wetlands. The Legacy Project has allocated funds for developing improved and updated statewide wetlands data. In 2001, the Resources Agency and the Coastal Conservancy entered into an Interagency Agreement to facilitate the implementation of this work program element. Working with the staff of the Resources Agency and Legacy Project staff, Conservancy staff has assisted in managing a collaborative process of inventorying existing wetlands data and identifying data gaps and needs

involving a large group of agency personnel. A project scope of work is in development. During the next couple of months, Conservancy staff anticipates that a final project scope will be completed.

Assembly Bill 2286 updates the Keene-Nejedly California Wetlands Preservation Act of 1976. Under the provisions of AB 2286, the Resources Agency is required to update and consolidate the state's existing wetlands inventory. In addition, based on the updated inventory, the Resources Agency is required to prepare a plan for the acquisition, protection, preservation, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands. The final project scope of work will include the required plan elements and a schedule for completing the work.

The most extensive inventory of the state of California's wetlands resources is the data set created by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Inventory (NWI). According to the staff of the NWI, California is covered by nearly 2,800 large-scale quadrangles. Of this total number, fewer than 50 percent are currently in digital form. While NWI receives funding annually to update aerial surveys and digitize this information, the schedule for creating a digital wetland data under current and proposed funding would preclude the development of up-to-date digital data layer.

Other recent or ongoing wetland mapping efforts in California include the Coastal Commission's coastal wetlands inventory for portion of the north and central coast regions, the California Department of Fish and Game's vernal pool inventory, the San Francisco Estuary Institute's S.F. EcoAtlas, and the Coastal Conservancy's Southern California Wetlands Inventory.

CONSISTENCY WITH
CONSERVANCY'S
ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resource Code Sections 31251-31270. Consistent with this chapter and with the definition of coastal resource enhancement project, as defined in Public Resources Code Section 31008, the proposed project would develop the most advanced GIS maps of the state's wetland resources in order to identify actions needed to be taken by local public, state, and federal agency and private nonprofit organizations necessary to acquire, where necessary, and to restore and enhance the resource values throughout the coast. This project will provide state agencies and cooperating conservation partners with better information and tools to support conservation investment decisions in California.

CONSISTENCY WITH
CONSERVANCY'S
PROJECT SELECTION
CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes: See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.

Consistency with purposes of the funding source: Funding from the Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) appropriated to the Coastal Conservancy, and funds from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game, will be used to address the protection and conservation of wetland resources and associated wetland habitats.

Location: Project funds will be used to develop improved and updated information regarding wetland resources statewide, focused on coastal wetlands resources.

Need: There exist significant gaps in up-to-date data for the state's coastal wetlands to adequately inform the Conservancy's, nonprofit organizations', and local, state, and federal agencies' resource enhancement priorities and projects. This project will address these gaps.

Greater-than-local interest: This project provides a tool for the conservation of the state's coastal wetlands. Additionally, such wetland protection is a statewide priority for the California Resources Agency, as well as its important operating departments and conservancies, including the California Department of Fish and Game and the Coastal Conservancy.

Additional Criteria

Realization of Prior Conservancy Goals: The Conservancy's long-standing interest and priority focus on coastal wetland resources will be addressed in the development of an improved and up-to-date wetlands database.

Cooperation: The California Legacy Project, and the State Wetlands Mapping effort embodied in the proposed project, have the cooperation of all agencies and stakeholders involved in wetland conservation in California, including all interested and responsible state and federal agencies, as well as other

nonprofit and private conservation partners including the San Francisco Estuary Institute and the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project.

CONSISTENCY WITH

THE COASTAL ACT: Section 30231 of the Coastal Act states that the “biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored. . . .” The proposed project would develop the most advanced GIS maps of the state’s wetlands and related riparian resources, focused on coastal wetland and riparian resources, in order to identify acquisition and restoration and enhancement projects.

COMPLIANCE

WITH CEQA: The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15262 as it involves only planning and feasibility analysis for possible future actions not yet approved, adopted, or funded. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project.